

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 06084 101432Z

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1045

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T BEIRUT 6084

EXDIS

MILITARY ADDRESSEES HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

DEPARTMENT PASS INFO CINCUSNAVEUR AND USCINCEUR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: AEMR, UK, LE

SUBJECT: BRITISH CONCERN OVER DETERIORATING SITUATION IN LEBANON

REF: LONDON 10703

1. BRITISH AMBASSADOR, PETER WAKEFIELD, HAS SHARED WITH ME HIS CONCERNS RE DETERIORATING SECURITY SITUATION IN LEBANON. HE HAS FORESEEN, AS HAVE WE IN SEPTTEL (NOTAL, POSSIBLE PLO BACKLASH AS RESULT OF SUCCESSFUL SYRIAN SQUEEZE PLAY ON PALESTINIAN POSITIONS THROUGHOUT LEBANON. IN THIS SCENARIO, PLO MIGHT CHOOSE TO USE WEST BEIRUT AS KIND OF FINAL REDOUBT. WAKEFIELD WANTS TO PLAY IT AS SAFE AS POSSIBLE, AND SO HE HAS SUGGESTED THAT FCO CONSIDER CLOSING BRITISH EMBASSY HERE WELL BEFORE THE POSSIBLE DELUGE.

2. ASIDE FROM FACT THAT CLOSING AMERICAN EMBASSY IN LEBANON HAS CONSIDERABLY MORE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND ALSO IMPLICATIONS (E.G. FUTURE OF AUB AND AUH) THAN CLOSING OF BRITISH EMBASSY., I DO NOT RPT NOT BELIEVE SECURITY AND POLITICAL SITUATION WARRANTS CLOSING OF THIS EMBASSY AT THIS TIME. SCENARIO DESCRIBED ABOVE IS PROBABLY REMOTE AND, IN ANY CASE, I DON'T THINK IT IS IMMINENT. WE MUST, HOWEVER, KEEP ON OUR TOES AND BE PREPARED TO TAKE RAPID

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ANTICIPATORY ACTION IF WE SEE SITUATION MOVING IN THIS DIRECTION,

I HAVE ALREADY RECOMMENDED ONE DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVE WE MIGHT TAKE IN SEPTTEL.

3. WHAT WE ARE DOING IS TO TAKE ANOTHER HARD LOOK AT SIZE OF EMBASSY STAFF AND TO DETERMINE WHETHER WE SHOULD NOT CUT FURTHER BEYOND REDUCTIONS THAT WE ARLREADY RECOMMENDED TO DEPT LAST WEEK IN BEIRUT 5853. AS REPORTED IN BEIRUT 5987, WE HAVE ALREADY CONSOLIDATED LIVING QUARTERS OF MOST STAFF MEMBERS IN EMBASSY, WITH HANDFUL OF OTHERS LIVING IN TWO NEARBY APARTMENT BUILDINGS.

4. WHILE I WILL BE GIVING MY ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT SITUATION IN SEPARATE MESSAGES, LET ME SAY HERE THAT I THINK SYRIANS ARE GOING TO CONTINUE TO PURSUE TACTIC OF EXTENDED BLOCKADE, COMBINED POSSIBLY WITH POLITICAL ACTION WITH PLO, BEFORE ATTACKING WEST BEIRUT. SYRIANS OBVIOUSLY ARE ALREADY FOLLOWING POLICY OF ATTEMPTING TO CHOKE OFF WEST BEIRUT, BOTH IN TERMS OF ARMS SUPPLIES AS WELL AS BASIC NECESSITIES SUCH AS GASOLINE AND FOODSTUFFS. THEY HOPE THEREBY TO SERIOUSLY WEAKEN CAPABILITY OF PLO AND LEBANESE LEFTIST GROUPS TO CONTINUE THEIR RESISTANCE IN WEST BEIRUT.

5. THIS, OF COURSE, AFFECTS US TOO, AND WE ARE CAREFULLY INVENTORYING OUR SUPPLIES AND ASSESSING FUTURE AVAILABILITIES. FOR MOMENT WE ARE DOING OKAY AND EXPECT NO PROBLEMS FOR AT LEAST ANOTHER THREE-FOUR WEEKS. SECOND FIRE AT SIDON AT REFINERY (FROM SYRIAN ARTILLERY FIRE) POSES REAL THREAT OF SERIOUS SHORTAGE OF GASOLINE AND FUEL OIL, AND FUTURE OF THE EMBASSY OBVIOUSLY WILL DEPEND ON ABILITY TO CONTINUE TO OPERATE OUR GENERATOR.

6. MEANWHILE, URGENTLY REQUEST DEPT AUTHORIZE STAFF REDUCTIONS PROPOSED BEIRUT 5853, SO THAT WE CAN BEGIN IMMEDIATELY TO SEND THESE PEOPLE OUT--HOPEFULLY BY MIDDLE OF NEXT WEEK.
SEELYE

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED ABOVE ADDRESSEES.

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